

# Civil Affairs in Peace Operations

by Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey A. Jacobs, US Army Reserve

**C**IVIL AFFAIRS (CA) doctrine states that “the CA mission is to support the commander’s relationship with civil authorities and civilian populace, promote mission legitimacy and enhance military effectiveness.”<sup>1</sup> In defining this mission, doctrine makes no distinction between combat and peace operations.

Recent operations have taught us that the CA mission is critical to the success of the overall mission, and that CA must be an integral part of both combat operations *and* peace operations. However, recent operations in Haiti and Bosnia have also shown that although the CA mission is different for both combat and peace operations, many commanders still do not fully understand how the CA mission should be accomplished in peacetime. This article examines how CA forces should support commanders during peace operations.

## CA Supporting Missions

US Army Field Manual 41-10, *Civil Affairs Operations*, identifies civil-military operations (CMO) as a command and operational function. CA activities provide the commander with a tool to assist in CMO mission accomplishment. All CA activities fall under the category of “support to CMO.” These activities include populace and resources control, humanitarian assistance (HA), military civic action, civil defense and support to civil administration. Joint and Army CA doctrine identify that both CA generalists and specialists may be required to support CMO based on the mission requirements and commander’s intent in a given area of operations (AO).

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The crucial difference between CMO and support to civil administration is as follows:

- In CMO, CA units directly support the military commander, even though civilians and civil organizations may benefit from such support.
- In support to civil administration, CA units directly support civil organizations, even though the military commander may benefit from that support.

The support to civil administration mission relies heavily on the civilian skills of US Army Reserve (USAR) CA soldiers, much more so than the CMO mission. Indeed, support to civil administration proclaims that “most CA operations require specific civilian skills that the RC [Reserve Components] can best maintain.”<sup>3</sup> This assumption is fundamental to the mix of CA forces, 97 percent of which are in the USAR.

From my standpoint, way too much emphasis is placed on support to civil administration and the corollary assumption that most CA operations require civilian skills. Most CA operations should involve CMO, not support to civil administration. This is true across the spectrum of conflict, even in peace operations. CA support to civil administration is a

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major source of "mission creep," and occurs because:

- Some Active Component (AC) commanders do not understand what CA units can and should do to support them.
- CA doctrine overemphasizes support to civil administration and the importance of civilian skills.
- USAR CA commanders are overeager to "get into the ball game," and support to civil administration is the way to do it.

### **The Changed CA Landscape**

The current concept of CA support to civil administration evolved from World War II military government operations and the immediate postwar period.

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CA forces were created to help govern occupied Germany.<sup>4</sup> To accomplish this mission, the Army recruited CA officers directly from the civilian population to take advantage of their unique skills.

In Post-World War II Germany, military commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower had complete and express executive, legislative and judicial power.<sup>5</sup> Support to civil administration was his explicit mission and CA soldiers with civilian skills were indispensable in facilitating mission accomplishment. This is a critical point because there were no civilian organizations on the ground capable of performing that mission. These factors are the *sine qua non* of support to civil administration.

Since World War II, the Army has had only one similar mission in which both of those two critical factors arguably existed: the restoration of Kuwait following Operation *Desert Storm*.<sup>6</sup> In every other mission, at least one of the factors has been absent. Likewise, CA's role should have been to support the commander in the theater of operations through CMO.

The CA landscape has changed dramatically since World War II. Perhaps the biggest changes are the advent of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the increased involvement of other governmental agencies in foreign development and assistance, and the proliferation of private voluntary

organizations (PVOs) and international organizations such as the UN and its plethora of agencies.

The USAID mission is foreign development, primarily economic development. To this end, USAID is active in assisting and advising foreign governments, principally in economic matters but also in establishing democratic government institutions, overseeing the delivery of HA, establishing educational and health services and other developmental activities.<sup>7</sup> This mission overlaps significantly with CA units' support to civil administration capabilities. As but one illustration, USAID education specialists help the governments of developing nations establish and maintain educational programs—a similar mission of CA public education teams.<sup>8</sup>

Other US government agency missions also overlap the CA units' capabilities. For instance, the Justice Department's International Criminal Investigative Training and Assistance Program's mission is very similar to a CA public safety team's. The missions of UN agencies, such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Health Organization, overlap the capabilities of the CA dislocated civilians and public health teams. The goals of hundreds of PVOs also overlap with CA support to civil administration missions.

### **CA in Peace Operations**

Support to civil administration is a necessary mission and CA forces must have the capability to perform it. Even in the absence of an express mission to provide it, some support may be necessary to "promote mission legitimacy and enhance military effectiveness"—to "win the hearts and minds" of the populace.

But the changed CA landscape has reduced the necessity for CA units to routinely provide broad support to civil administration, in both combat and peace operations. Today, providing support to civil administration without an express mission to do so should be undertaken only after careful deliberation, and CA units should avoid usurping the province of civilian organizations in the AO. Otherwise, CA causes "mission creep" and involves the Army unnecessarily in civilian business. In peace operations, as in combat, the CA focus should be on CMO.

CA mission creep caused by unnecessary support to civil administration and the overlap between CA capabilities and the missions of civil organizations were readily apparent in Operation *Joint Endeavor*/*Joint Guard* in Bosnia. The initial military mission there was to enforce the military provisions of the peace treaty among the factions.<sup>9</sup> This is a peace enforcement (PE) mission, with perhaps some peacekeeping aspects—



A 1st Infantry Division (Mech) soldier checks identification cards at a military checkpoint as part of ongoing CMO in Bosnia.

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Many CA units in-theater, especially at the corps and theater levels, are engaged in the PE support mission as well as, in their own words, “rebuilding Bosnia.” The CA command headquarters in Bosnia has described the “stated” mission in Bosnia as “identify[ing] the needs and projects for rebuilding of civil infrastructure and institutions [and to] coordinate with international organizations, nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and humanitarian agencies to obtain necessary materials, money and manpower to meet these needs.”<sup>11</sup> A curious omission in this mission statement is any mention of *support to the military commander*. In short, CA forces have described their mission as support to civil administration.

In implementing this mission, the CA force in Bosnia has “supported” and “assisted” many international and other civilian organizations. Among others, it has claimed the following successes:

- Supported the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe during the election process.
- Supported the UN International Police Task Force (IPTF).

- Supported the UNHCR.
- Implemented civil reconstruction plans.
- Worked with the former warring factions to revise property laws.
- Formed a working group to assess public health issues and make recommendations for improving the public health infrastructure.
- Assisted the World Bank.<sup>12</sup>

One must ask why providing all of this support is necessary. CA units in Bosnia are “rebuilding” the nation. Yet USAID and other organizations are also “rebuilding” the nation. USAID, for instance, is working with Bosnian banks to rebuild the economy and is financing and supervising contractors who will begin rebuilding the country’s infrastructure.<sup>13</sup> Compare USAID’s mission in Bosnia with the CA command’s strikingly similar mission description.

As another example, the CA support provided to the IPTF consists of technical assistance and assessments by CA public safety teams, which are designed to “coordinate public safety activities” and to “advise, assist or supervise local police.”<sup>14</sup> In Bosnia, though, this is the IPTF’s mission, not the

military's. The same anomaly exists in many other situations in which CA has undertaken to "support" and "assist" civil organizations. The efficacy of using Army assets to advise civilian experts is doubtful at best.

Perhaps even harder to understand is the manner in which CA support has been given to civil organizations in Bosnia. In many cases, CA soldiers actually have become part of the civilian organizations they support, wearing civilian clothes and working directly for their supported organizations, furthering the goals of those organizations rather than the commander's. In essence, the Army mobilized these

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Reservists because of their civilian skills, but instead of employing them as soldiers, they are employing them as civilian "augmentees," allowing them to become part of the civilian organizations they are supporting. Thus, defense dollars have been used to fund the Office of the High Representative (OHR), in which a CA officer "fills a critical role . . . as the Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff [of the OHR]." <sup>15</sup> The incongruity should be self-evident.

Further, their civilian clothing and civilian surroundings sometimes have led CA soldiers actually to work *against* the interests of the commander. For instance, obtaining information from civilian organizations is vital to the military mission because information from these organizations often verifies intelligence reports or even constitutes raw information that could be developed into intelligence. However, these organizations are often reluctant to share that information directly with the military. Realizing that their primary mission is not to gather intelligence and that they must walk a fine line to maintain credibility with the populace and other civil organizations, the CA soldiers working directly in those organizations nonetheless have the means to obtain valuable information and to share it with their supported commanders. In many instances, they have either failed to realize the importance of

the information or failed to implement systems to collect and transmit it. <sup>16</sup>

In contrast to Operation *Joint Endeavor*/*Joint Guard*, Operation *Uphold Democracy* in Haiti demonstrated more carefully considered employment of CA assets. The joint task force (JTF) mission in Haiti, like the mission in Bosnia, was a PE mission—to ensure the stability and peace of the region. It was not nation assistance, a "peacebuilding" mission as defined by US Army Field Manual 100-23, *Peace Operations*. <sup>17</sup>

The JTF in Haiti did engage in operations that supported civilian agencies but only because such support furthered the command's mission. The civilian agencies' ability to influence the Haitian people and to continue their work—whether feeding, educating, building or healing—was central to achieving the US military mission end state—a safe and secure environment in Haiti. <sup>18</sup> The JTF, however, ensured that all assistance to the civilian populace flowed through civilian government agencies, such as the USAID and NGOs and took particular care not to supplant those organizations. <sup>19</sup> In so doing, the JTF ensured that it did not cross the line between PE and peacebuilding.

Although civilian organizations in Haiti received the benefit of CA assistance, that assistance was provided principally as a means to support the commander. Thus the provision of support to humanitarian organizations was key to the military objective. Indeed, to be approved, CA missions "had to contribute directly to the stability and security of the area or to military operations or soldier welfare." <sup>20</sup> There were no CA soldiers in civilian clothes working inside civilian organizations, and the defense budget was not used for nation assistance when that was not the military mission. <sup>21</sup> Operation *Uphold/Maintain Democracy* showed that CA forces can provide effective support to the commander during peace operations without involving the military force unnecessarily in the business of civilian governmental and NGOs.

### **Refocusing the CA Effort**

Should the CA mission be to "rebuild Bosnia" when it is not the supported commander's mission? The answer is "no!" CA support in peace operations is crucial, but the commander, not civil agencies, should be the direct recipient of that support. In peace operations, CA support to civil administration should be undertaken only under carefully circumscribed conditions, which, in my estimation, will rarely occur.

With the creation of USAID and similar organizations in other countries, such as the British Overseas Development Agency, the UN and its myriad humanitarian and international agencies, and with the proliferation of PVOs, support to civil administration missions have become increasingly unnecessary in peace operations. In Germany at the end of World War II and in Kuwait City at the end of Operation *Desert Storm*, there were few civilian organizations on the ground. Either the Army was going to assist the government or there would be no assistance. In Haiti, the military was actually the last to arrive on the scene. UN agencies, USAID and other organizations had been there for some time when US forces arrived, and PVOs had been operating there for years.<sup>22</sup>

This is not to say that, in operations like *Joint Endeavor/Joint Guard*, CA should not provide some support to civilian organizations. Rather, "Civil and military leaders must understand that strict adherence solely to overseeing the military provisions of the peace agreement [in Bosnia] is short-sighted and actually could prolong the need for an outside military presence."<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the peace treaty itself gives the military the mission "to assist the UNHCR and other international organizations in their humanitarian missions" in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>24</sup> However, this mission is not a license to perform support to civil administration operations. Such support should be provided as part of CMO support to the military commander.

During the buildup prior to the Bosnian national elections, the Implementation Force ground component commander and the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps commander made support to the elections the corps' main effort, realizing that if the elections failed, the military mission could fail as well. While the identification and refurbishment of polling stations was occupying the majority of the corps commander's assets, his corps-level CA assets did not change their focus as the main effort changed, instead continuing to identify nation assistance projects that were unrelated to the elections. Those CA assets—the functional experts with "hard" civilian skills—could have provided critical support to the corps commander by assisting civil authorities in traditional CA areas such as public communications and public works and utilities, ensuring that polling stations were fit for a fall election in the Balkans.

What can be done to ensure that CA assets, especially USAR CA assets, provide more responsive and focused support to the commander and do not become bogged down in providing unnecessary

support to civil administration? Several measures come to mind.

First, CA operations are a *command* responsibility. Commanders at all levels must be as familiar with employing CA assets as they are with employing

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As a corollary, commanders must realize that CA units are not necessarily the optimal force to perform every mission with the word "civilian" in it. In many peace operations in which Army forces are not closing with and destroying the enemy—such as *Joint Endeavor/Joint Guard*—contact with civil organizations transcends CA units. All commanders and units, not just CA soldiers and units, interact routinely with civilians and civil organizations. Although liaison with civil organizations is a valid CA mission, liaison with an international police force may sometimes be a mission more suited for the provost marshal than for the CA public safety team, to ensure that military police operations are coordinated with those of the civilian police. Moreover, many civilian organizations do not need CA soldiers' civilian skills but require the military skills of AC soldiers to assist in areas such as training and logistics.

Second, CMO should be recognized as the principal CA mission. CA doctrine should be rewritten to reduce the prominence of the support to civil administration mission. Although support to civil administration is a mission that USAR CA units must be capable of performing, that capability is required much more infrequently than the capability to perform CMO.

Third, the USAR CA community must tout its civilian skills less and concentrate more on improving the ability of its officers to mesh seamlessly with their AC counterparts. Staff skills are as important as

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civilian skills, if not more so, to a CA officer who ends up on the staff of the supported commander. A CA officer who is a first-rate economist but who has trouble deciphering operation orders will not be able to provide optimum CA support to the commander—especially when there is no immediate requirement for his economic skills because the mission is CMO, not support to civil administration.

In sum, senior CA commanders must stop seeing a nation assistance mission behind every door, and their supported commanders must be skeptical when their CA commanders see one. USAR CA commanders have a duty to the Army, the taxpayer and their soldiers to stand up and say: "There is

no support to civil administration mission in this operation plan. Therefore, we do not need an entire CA command headquarters, with all of its civilian skills, to accomplish the CA mission. What you need is a competent core of staff officers to form your CA staff section, and militarily proficient CA generalists to support your battalions and brigades on the ground and to conduct liaison with the civilian organizations already in place and providing assistance to the populace."

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict H. Allen Holmes stated in June 1996 "that peace operations have a civil dimension, that civil objectives are separate from military objectives and that there is a need for coordination between civilian and military operations, especially as we transition from a military to civilian operation."<sup>26</sup> CA soldiers are key to the coordination between civil and military operations, but they must recognize the distinction between them. To cross the line between civil and military operations is to cease providing support to the military commander. When CA soldiers no longer support the military commander, they might as well be hired as civilians by whichever agency needs them. **MR**

## NOTES

1. US Army Field Manual (FM) 41-10, *Civil Affairs Operations* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office [GPO], January 1993), 1-1.

2. FM 41-10, 1-3.

3. See, for example, Thomas E. Ricks, "Executive Action: An Army Reserve Unit Guides Reconstruction of Postwar Bosnia," *The Wall Street Journal*, 10 June 1996, 1.

4. Earl F. Ziemke, *The U.S. Army in the Occupation of Germany, 1944-1946* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 1975), 80-81.

5. *Ibid.*, 59.

6. See MG Robert S. Frix and CPT Archie L. Davis III, "Task Force Freedom and the Restoration of Kuwait," *Military Review* (October 1992) 2-10.

7. See USAID Congressional Presentation, FY 97, *Haiti* <<http://www.info.usaid.gov/pubs/cp97/countries/ht.htm>>.

8. FM 41-10, 4-14.

9. *General Framework Agreement for Peace*, Annex 1-A, Article VI, 14 December 1995, 35 I.L.M. 75 (hereafter *GFAP*).

10. FM 100-23, *Peace Operations* (Washington, DC: GPO, December 1994), 4-6.

11. IFOR AFSOUTH Fact Sheet, "Combined Joint Civil Military Cooperation," 20 August 1996 <<http://www.nato.int/for/general/fs-cimic.htm>> (hereafter "IFOR Fact Sheet").

12. IFOR Fact Sheet.

13. USAID Press Release, "USAID Bosnia Reconstruction Program Moves into High Gear" (13 June 1996) <<http://www.iep.doc.gov/eebic/balkan/opps/aidpress.htm>>.

14. FM 41-10, 4-14.

15. IFOR Fact Sheet.

16. As a personal vignette, I was told in Sarajevo by a CA officer "detailed" to a civilian organization not to pass a critical piece of information to the ground component commander until it had been cleared by the staff of the civilian organization.

17. FM 100-23, 2.

18. CPT Nancy C. Henderson, "Civil Affairs and Logistics in Haiti," *Army Logistician* (May-June 1996), 20.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, 21.

21. There were, however, CA "ministerial advisory teams" which operated completely independently of the JTF that worked with the Haitian government. The mission of these teams overlapped significantly with the missions of organizations such as USAID, and the necessity for them was not altogether clear.

22. Dr. Margaret Daly Hays and RADM Gary F. Wheatley, USN Ret., eds., *Interagency and Political-Military Dimensions of Peace Operations: Haiti—A Case Study* (National Defense University Press, 1996), ch. 4 <<http://www.ndu.edu/ndui/nss/books/haiti/haithome.html>>.

23. William T. Johnsen, *U.S. Participation in IFOR: A Marathon, Not a Sprint* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army Strategic Studies Institute, 20 June 1996), 27.

24. *GFAP* Annex 1-A, Article VI.

25. LTC Glenn H. Gardner, "Civil-Military Ops, the Brcko Bridge and Other Lessons Learned in Joint Endeavor," *Civil Affairs Journal and Newsletter* (January-February 1997), 5.

26. H. Allen Holmes, "Civil Affairs Soldiers are Crucial to Peace," Prepared remarks of Holmes for the 1996 Worldwide Civil Affairs Conference, Washington, DC, 20 June 1996, in *Defense Issues*, Vol. 11, No. 60, 1.

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